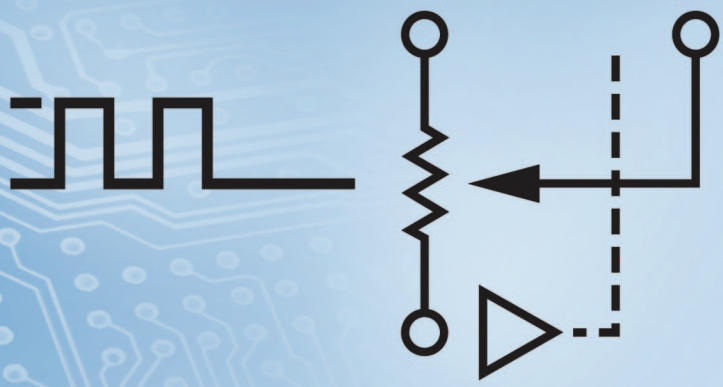
Choosing the Correct digiPOT for Your Application



Analog Devices offers a wide range of digital potentiometer (digiPOT) options, including different memory technologies, single and dual supply, a variety of digital interfaces, high resolution devices, and the industry's broadest end-to-end resistance options.

What Is a digiPOT?

A digiPOT is a digitally controlled device that can be used to adjust voltage or current and offers the same analog functions as a mechanical potentiometer or rheostat. This allows an automatic calibration process that is more accurate, robust, and faster, with smaller voltage glitches. digiPOTs are often used for digital trimming and calibration of analog signals and are typically controlled by digital protocols, such as I²C and SPI, as well as more basic up/down and push-button protocols.

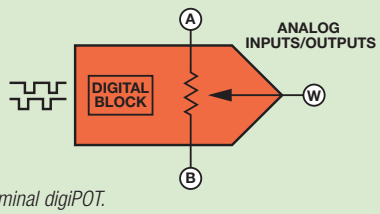


Figure 1. 3-terminal digiPOT.

Architecture

A digiPOT is a 3-terminal device (see Figure 1), with an internal architecture that is comprised of an array of resistances and switches. Each digiPOT consists of passive resistors in series between terminals A and B. The wiper terminal, W, is digitally programmable to access any one of the 2^n tap points on the resistor string.

The resistance between terminals A and B, R_{AB}, is commonly called the end-to-end resistance. ADI offers a wide range of end-to-end resistor options spanning from 1 kΩ to 1 MΩ.

The resistance between terminals A and W, R_{AW}, and the resistance between terminals B and W, R_{WB}, are complementary. That is, if R_{AW} increases, then R_{WB} will decrease in the same proportion.

There is no restriction on the voltage polarity applied to terminals A, B, or W. Voltage across the terminals A to B, W to A, and W to B can be at either polarity—the only requirement is to ensure that the signal does not exceed the power supply rails. Similarly, there is no limitation in the current flow direction; the only restriction is that the maximum current does not exceed the current density specification, typically on the order of a few mA.

Which digiPOT to Use?

When choosing the correct digital potentiometer for your application, the key parameters to consider are

I. Resistor configuration
II. Digital interface
III. Internal memory
IV. Supply voltage
V. End-to-end resistance
VI. Resolution
VII. Performance
VIII. Package

I. Resistor Configuration

A digiPOT can be configured as a potentiometer or as a rheostat.

Potentiometer Mode

In this configuration, there are three terminals available: A, B, and W (see Figure 2).

The digiPOT operates as a voltage divider, and the wiper terminal voltage is proportional to the voltage applied between the A and B terminals and the resistance at R_{AW} and R_{WB}.

In Figure 3, a reference voltage is connected to Terminal A, and Terminal B is grounded. The voltage at the wiper pin can be calculated as

$$V_{OUT} = \frac{CODE}{2^n} \times V_{REF}$$

Typical Applications

- DAC
- LCD V_{COM} adjustment
- Analog signal attenuation

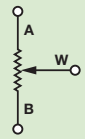


Figure 2. Potentiometer.

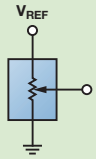


Figure 3. DAC mode.

Rheostat Mode

The digiPOT can operate as a digitally controlled rheostat where only two terminals are used. The unused terminal can be left floating or tied to the W terminal, as shown in Figure 4.

The nominal end-to-end resistance (R_{AB}) of the digiPOT has 2^n contact points accessible by the wiper terminal, and the resulting resistance can be measured either across the wiper and B terminals (R_{WB}) or across the wiper and A terminals (R_{AW}).

The minimum wiper resistance is at the wiper's first connection at the B terminal for zero scale. This B terminal connection has a minimum wiper contact resistance, R_W, of typically 70 Ω.

The rheostat resistance can be calculated by

$$R_{AW} = \frac{2^n - CODE}{2^n} \times R_{AB} + R_W \quad \text{or} \quad R_{WB} = \frac{CODE}{2^n} \times R_{AB} + R_W$$

Typical Applications

- Wheatstone bridge calibration
- Op amp gain control (see Figure 5)
- Analog filter tuning

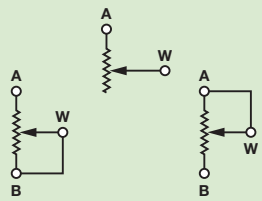


Figure 4. Rheostat.

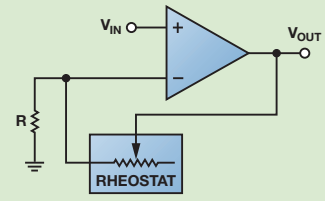


Figure 5. Noninverting amplifier.

II. Digital Interface

ADI's large digiPOT portfolio supports a wide range of digital interfaces:

- **SPI—**ADI offers SPI-compatible interfaces that can be operated at speeds up to 50 MHz clock rate.
- **I²C—**ADI offers I²C-compatible interfaces that support standard and fast mode, up to a 400 kHz clock rate. Address pins are typically available, which allow the user to configure the slave address so that multiple devices can be operated on the same bus.
- **Push-Button—**The user can interact directly with the system by just adding two push-button switches. Press the UP button to increment the resistance and DOWN to decrement resistance (see Figure 6).
- **Up/Down—**This is a simple interface, which can be operated by any host controller or discrete logic or manually with a rotary encoder or push buttons. With a single edge, resistance can be increased or decreased.

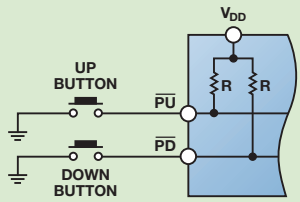


Figure 6. Push-button interface.

III. Internal Memory

ADI's wide portfolio supports four different options of integrated memory, allowing the user the flexibility to select the ideal digiPOT for the end application. Internal memory allows the user to set the wiper's power-on reset (POR) position to a user-programmed value. The wiper position can be reprogrammed multiple times, but always returns to the programmed position on power-up. This function is ideal for calibration or for applications that require a fast power-on time.

- Volatile memory only: digiPOT typically powers up to midscale.
- One-time programmable (OTP): allows user to program the wiper power-up position once—ideal for factory calibration.
- Multitime programmable (MTP): ADI has product offerings that support 2×, 20×, or 50× programmable wiper memory.
- EEPROM: ADI's integrated EEPROM offers endurance up to 100k programming cycles and data retention of 50 years at +125°C.

IV. Supply Voltage

Before selecting a digiPOT for an application, it is important to understand the maximum signal voltage that will be applied to the A, B, or W terminals. The positive, V_{DD}, and negative, V_{SS} (or GND for a unipolar digiPOT), power supplies define the voltage signal boundary conditions. Signals that exceed V_{DD} or V_{SS} are typically clamped by internal forward-biased diodes.

ADI's large portfolio supports a wide range of supply options:

- Single supply: +2.3 V to +33 V (see Figure 7)
- Dual supply: ±2.25 V to ±16.5 V (see Figure 8)

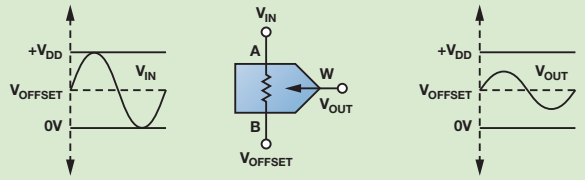


Figure 7. AC signal, single supply mode.

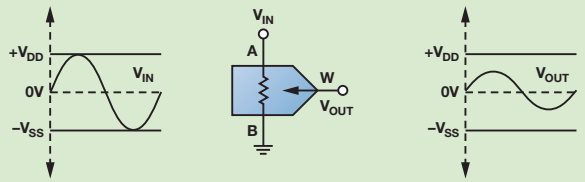


Figure 8. AC signal, dual supply mode.

V. End-to-End Resistance

ADI offers a wide range of end-to-end resistor options, from 1 kΩ to 1 MΩ. This simplifies the task of achieving the optimum impedance, power dissipation, bandwidth, and noise performance combination.

VI. Resolution

ADI has offerings ranging from 5-bit to 10-bit resolution offering LSB step sizes as low as 4 Ω. If more resolution is required, then a cascade, serial, or parallel combination of digiPOTs can be implemented (see Table 1).

Table 1. Quick Reference Resistance Options

		Resistance (Ω)										
		1k	2.5k	5k	10k	20k	25k	50k	100k	200k	250k	1M
Resolution (Taps)	32				•			•	•			
	64	•		•	•				•			
	128				•			•	•			
	256	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•		•
	1024				•	•	•	•	•		•	

VII. Key Performance Parameters

Resistor Tolerance Error—digiPOT resistor tolerance error is the absolute end-to-end resistance error. This error is typically ±20% and can be a critical parameter if matching to an external discrete resistor, sensor, etc., in an open-loop application.

Reducing the Impact of Resistor Tolerance Error

- ADI offers digiPOTs, for example, the AD5272 and AD5292, with industry-leading maximum ±1% variable resistor performance. These devices enable designers to digitally program accurate resistor values, simplifying the process of determining the system error budget (see Figure 9).
- Products such as the AD5259 and AD5235 have the resistor tolerance error stored in the EEPROM memory. This allows the user to calculate the actual end-to-end resistance to an accuracy of 0.01%.

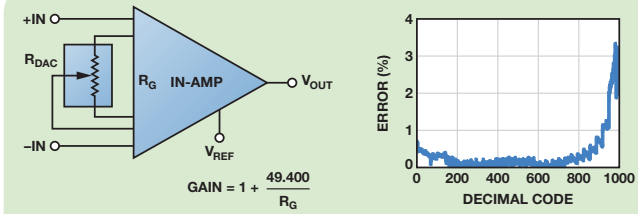


Figure 9. Instrumentation amplifier.

digiPOT Temperature Coefficient—ADI's digiPOTs leverage proprietary thin-film resistor technology, leading to the lowest temperature coefficient performance available on the market (for example, AD5292):

- 5 ppm/°C in potentiometer mode
- 35 ppm/°C in rheostat mode

Bandwidth—The digiPOT architecture is comprised of resistors and switches (see Figure 10). The resistance of the resistors in the path of a particular code, combined with the switch parasitic, pin, and board capacitances, creates an RC low-pass filter, which determines the maximum ac frequency that can be passed through the digiPOT before it is attenuated by more than –3 dB. Choosing a low end-to-end resistor option will support a higher –3 dB bandwidth (see Table 2).

Table 2. Typical –3 dB Bandwidth vs. Resistor Option

Resistance	1 kΩ	5 kΩ	10 kΩ	50 kΩ	100 kΩ	1 MΩ
Frequency	5 MHz	2 MHz	500 kHz	120 kHz	70 kHz	6 kHz

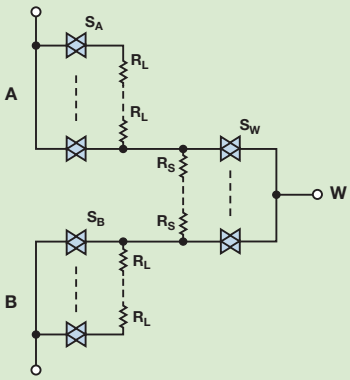


Figure 10. Internal architecture.

THD—An ac signal applied to the terminals of a digiPOT will cause variation in the internal switch, R_{ON}, leading to some nonsymmetrical attenuation and, therefore, signal distortion (see Figure 11). Choosing a high end-to-end resistor option reduces the contribution of the internal switches' resistance vs. the total resistance, leading to better THD performance. Table 3 shows some typical THD performance values.

Table 3. Typical THD Performance

AD5292	20 kΩ	50 kΩ	100 kΩ
THD	–93 dB	–101 dB	–106 dB

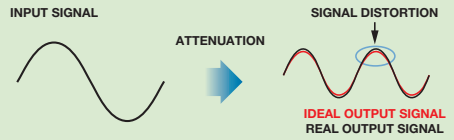


Figure 11. Total harmonic distortion.

VIII. Packages

ADI digiPOTs are available in a wide range of packages:

- SC70
- LFCSP
- SOT-23
- MSOP
- TSSOP
- SOIC

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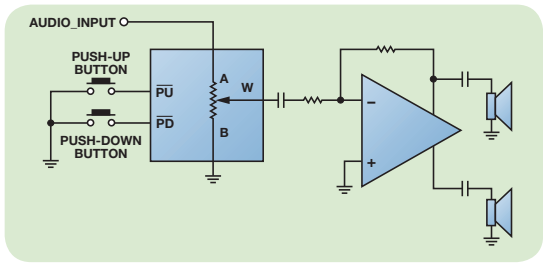
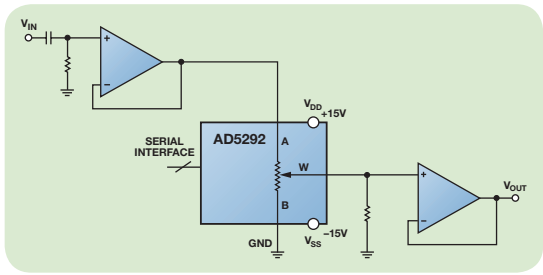
Visit the circuit library where you can find digiPOT circuit designs at *www.analog.com/circuits*.

Applications

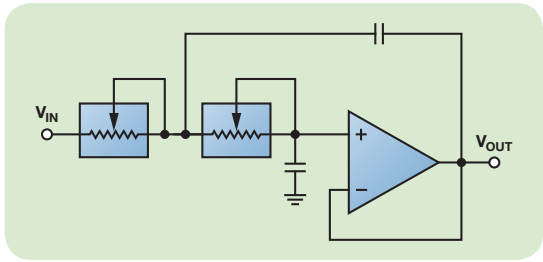
Audio Volume Control with an Amplifier and Push-Button Interface



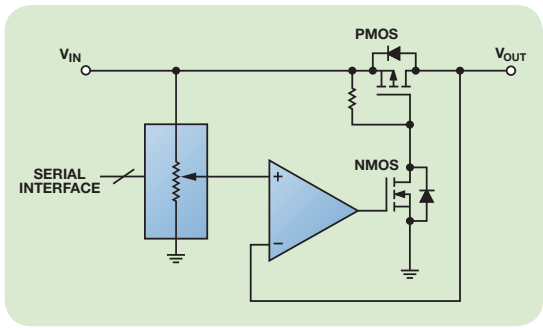
Logarithmic Pro-Audio Volume Control



Variable Low-Pass Sallen-Key Filter



Programmable Voltage Source with Current Booster



Analog Devices, Inc.
Worldwide Headquarters
Analog Devices, Inc.
Three Technology Way
P.O. Box 9106
Norwood, MA 02062-9106
U.S.A.
Tel: 781.329.4700
(800.262.5643,
U.S.A. only)
Fax: 781.461.3113

Analog Devices, Inc.
Europe Headquarters
Analog Devices, Inc.
Wilhelm-Wagenfeld-Str. 6
80807 Munich
Germany
Tel: 49.89.76903.0
Fax: 49.89.76903.157

Analog Devices, Inc.
Japan Headquarters
Analog Devices, KK
New Pier Takeshiba
South Tower Building
1-16-1 Kaigan, Minato-ku,
Tokyo, 105-6891
Japan
Tel: 813.5402.8200
Fax: 813.5402.1064

Analog Devices, Inc.
Southeast Asia
Headquarters
Analog Devices
22/F One Corporate Avenue
222 Hu Bin Road
Shanghai, 200021
China
Tel: 86.21.2320.8000
Fax: 86.21.2320.8222

I²C refers to a communications protocol originally developed by Philips Semiconductors (now NXP Semiconductors).

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